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The Bureau of Land Management Service Center Newsletter May 1992

CENTER SCENE

LEARNING CENTER MAKES THE GRADE

Nestled away in one wing of Building 53, the Denver Learning Center positively affects many SC employees, but still remains a mystery to most of us.

With so many Department of the Interior employees in the Denver area, all Interior agencies decided to pool together to provide quality training. The Denver Learning Center is now one of four Interior Learning Centers based on this concept — the others are in Washington, DC; Albuquerque, New Mexico; and Lawrence, Kansas.

Susan Hoffman has overseen the Denver Learning Center since its inception 7 years ago. The Center has expanded to deliver over 46 different courses in Fiscal Year 1992, many of them offered multiple times. Courses include such diverse titles as Orientation to Mentoring and Coaching, Professional Ethics for Government Employees, and Federal Government Driver's Awareness Refresher.

A committee of agency representatives helps the Center determine its course schedule. Training Officer William Moody represents the Service Center and the Colorado State Office on the advisory council. The council also conducts a vigorous competitive process for instructors. The large number of Denver-based underemployed instructor-consultants helps assure an unusually high level of quality in Learning Center instructors. Other instructors from local Federal agencies keep courses current with the latest developments from the Federal sector.

What could be better than diverse, quality training? Well, many agencies and their budgets are helped by the fact that the Denver Learning Center charges no tuition. This sounds too good to be true. Unfortunately, it is such a good deal that waiting lists of over a year to get into a course are not uncommon.

If you are interested in more information regarding Learning Center courses or self-study materials, see your Division Staff Assistant for a look at the latest Denver Learning Center catalogue. And, if you are interested in enrolling in a course, send a short note with your supervisor's approval to the Training Officer, SC-631.

PERSONNEL NEWS

New Employees:

Michael Banigan, Comp. Sys. Analyst, SC-342
Mary Belding, Civil Eng., SC-672
Terry Brokovich, Sr., Chief, Sys. Software Sect., SC-343
Anna Fichter, Library Aid, SC-653
Ching-Jiunn Huang, Comp. Spec., SC-342
Charrie Jennings, Library Aid, SC-653
Brent Lewis, Geologist, SC-212
Patricia Moreno, Mgmt. Analyst, SC-322
Linda Oliver, Comp. Spec., SC-323
Lynda Pierce, Vchr. Exam., SC-616
Allen Pope, Jr., Sys. Acct., SC-613
Lori Quayle, Ed. Asst., SC-673
Gary Slagel, Comp. Spec., SC-342
Karl Smith, Comp. Spec., SC-342
Bryan Vial, Comp. Prog. Analyst, SC-342
Mary Willard, Comp. Spec., SC-310
Joseph Wright, Comp. Spec., SC-344

SOCIAL HOUR

The first ALMRS/Modernization social gathering was held recently on the lawn of Building 40. Here Service Center Director Marv LeNoue, left, Project Manager Linda Colville, center, and Roger Molinar, right, enjoy the good food and conversation.

A NEW LEASE ON WORK

The SC Branch of Procurement acquires numerous products and services, ranging from vehicles to parachutes. But here's a question for you — what is one thing that the Procurement folks may acquire for you that you would use every single workday? In fact, you would not be able to work without it. It keeps you warm in the winter and cool in the summer. Answer? It's the building where you work. Although GSA still provides leased buildings in the major metropolitan areas, the Bureau now has authority to lease the buildings where we work for many of the District and Resource Area Offices.

The Real Property and Space Acquisition Section was organized in 1987 when authority to enter into leases was received from GSA. The Bureau's leasing program has grown from a single person, originally hired in 1987, to a current staff of 10. The Section currently administers approximately 100 leases, with terms ranging from 3 to 20 years. The current emphasis is on acquiring high quality space designed specifically to meet the unique needs of BLM State, District, and Resource Area Offices. In FY 91 the leasing staff awarded 15 separate lease contracts in 10 states, with annual rents totalling approximately $2 million.

The leasing staff feels that their most important accomplishment is when they can replace a leased building that is too small, inefficient, poorly located, and poorly maintained with a newly constructed, modern, efficient office and warehouse building. If there is one negative part of their work, it is that many of the leases inherited from GSA are still in the "firm term," meaning that the Government cannot cancel the lease and move out. For people who work in these buildings, a new lease cannot be signed until the current one expires. However, if you are fortunate enough to have recently moved from one of the Bureau's less desirable buildings into a new building acquired by these leasing specialists, then you may be able to appreciate their efforts.

SHARING GLOBAL CONCEPTS...

New technologies keep changing the way we do business. Years ago, land surveyors would brave the elements and other hardships to perform their frontier surveys. Now, using the latest in satellite and computer technology, surveyors can attain accuracies to the centimeter or better while maintaining computer-equipped offices instead of long-term field camps.

Today's satellite surveying technology relies on Department of Defense NAVSTAR satellites scattered evenly throughout different Earth orbits at an altitude of about 11,000 miles. These satellites generate a complex pulsed radio signal that can be received on the ground using small, lightweight receivers. Based on measuring the time it takes for the satellite's signal to reach the receiver, a surveyor can determine the distance to the satellite and subsequently pinpoint ground positions.

Recently, a group of 27 surveyors completed a course on the Global Positioning System (GPS) given by the Service Center. U.S. Forest Service and BLM surveyors form all parts of the United States, as well as two Egyptian students (see story below), gathered at a motel adjacent to the Denver Federal Center to put in 8 classroom hours a day for 2 weeks. Instructors from the National Geodetic Survey, the Forest Service, and BLM taught GPS theory and practice.

The Branch of Cadastral Survey Development organized the training session. Dick Case was in charge of logistics, including ensuring the availability and performance of 15 leased computers. Jerry Fiedler formulated topics for training, helped plan the course agenda, and filled in at the last minute for an instructor who couldn't make it to Denver. Tim Geary helped teach one of the sessions, and moved a truckload of field equipment to the classroom so that students could take actual GPS satellite observations and work with real data. Herman Weiss provided additional support.

The course went extremely well, judging by the student evaluations. Students were so interested in the subject matter that they often spent much of their lunch breaks in the classroom talking with the instructors or comparing notes with each other. Bob Yeager, Regional representative for Forest Service offices in 13 states, noted, "The course was great! I learned a lot of new information and met a lot of good contacts I can use in the future." Fred Wheeler, a BLM surveyor from Carson City, Nevada, found the course to be a good introduction and said, "The instructors were excellent and the course met the needs of people having a wide variety of backgrounds and expertise."

While future times and places for the course are still up in the air, there is no question that the course should be repeated. GPS technology is too valuable to be kept in the hands of only a few experts.

From left, Bob Yeager, Jay Innes, Maged Farouk Zaky, and Khaled Mohamed Hassen participate in the hands-on portion of the GPS course.

...DRAWING CLOSER TOGETHER

Egyptian visitors Khaled Mohamed Hassen, left, and Maged Farouk Zaky.

Two students traveled a long way to attend the GPS course...in fact, they came all the way from Cairo, Egypt! Khaled Mohamed Hassen and Maged Farouk Zaky, both studying for their Master's degrees, were visiting the United States for the first time.

For Khaled, this was his first trip outside of Egypt. Maged had spent time in France and Syria. Both had some reservations about what they would find in the United States when they arrived. Based on news reports and television shows, they expected to find a society where violence and drugs were everywhere. Maged and Khaled were pleasantly surprised to find that this was not true. "Most of the people we have met have been very decent and religious," observed Maged.

The first weekend they were here, Khaled and Maged traveled to the Winter Park ski area, where Khaled saw his first snow ever. He thought it was a lot of fun and very beautiful and really enjoyed the experience. The two explorers also had an opportunity to visit Estes Park and Rocky Mountain National Park, where they saw elk and other wildlife.

Some cultural differences caught the two students by surprise. In Cairo, shops in the center of town stay open late, while those on the outskirts close early. When they boarded an RTD bus and headed into downtown Denver, Khaled and Maged found that most businesses had closed by 6:00 p.m., so instead, they rode to suburban malls, which were open much later (they thought Southwest Plaza and Villa Italia were "wonderful").

Another cultural difference involved family structures and customs. In the U.S., many people move out of their parents' homes and live on their own before they marry. In Egypt, however, sons and daughters usually live with parents or other family members until they marry. So it is not unusual to have singles in their twenties and thirties living with Mom and Dad.

Both students expressed the hope that they could continue their graduate studies in the United States sometime in the future. In the meantime, each will take back a wealth of new GPS knowledge from the course and memories of snow and elk, of mountains and shopping malls, and of a people and culture that proved to be a bit kinder and saner than what they had expected. In some small way, two nations and peoples have been drawn closer together.